

Kosmas Calls for Permanent Display of Shuttle Orbiter at KSC

Leads Bipartisan FL Delegation Letter to Administrator Bolden Supporting KSC's Bid

December 15, 2009

(Washington, DC) — Today, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) led the Florida Congressional Delegation in sending a letter to Administrator Charles Bolden expressing strong support for the permanent display of a Shuttle Orbiter at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex upon its retirement. The bipartisan letter was signed by all 25 Florida members of the U.S. House of Representatives as well as Senators Bill Nelson and George LeMieux.

"While we have been successful in eliminating the hard deadline for Shuttle retirement, we know that we cannot fly the Shuttle forever and there is no better place to display a retired Orbiter than the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex," said Congresswoman Kosmas. "The Shuttle program, supported for decades by the dedication of thousands of hard-working professionals and technicians, has its launch history right here in Central Florida. For this reason, and because our region is host to 48 million visitors each year, it is appropriate to retain one of the retired Orbiters at KSC."

"Where else would you put the shuttle?" U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson said. "It belongs there, with all the other ships that have borne so many of our brave men and women explorers."

In December 2008, NASA sought parties interested in housing an Orbiter and related equipment. At that time, Kennedy Space Center and the KSC Visitor Complex responded to the request but to date NASA has not taken any further action. The letter sent today demonstrates the strong desire of the Florida Delegation to have a Shuttle Orbiter remain in Central Florida.

The full text of the letter can be found below:

Dear Administrator Bolden:

We wish to express strong support for the permanent display of a Shuttle Orbiter at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex upon its retirement.

The Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex (KSC-VC) is the best location to house a retired Orbiter. The Visitor Complex is home to many of NASA's historic artifacts - from Project Mercury through the Space Shuttle program - and is dedicated to telling NASA's story in a compelling way. With over 1.6 million visitors every year, it is the premier location for educating the American public on the incredible Shuttle story and continuing to inspire and garner public support for human space flight far into the future.

Since Florida's Space Coast is the site that has housed and launched the Orbiters throughout the Shuttle program, and is home to the thousands of dedicated men and women who made the Shuttle program a success, it has authenticity that other sites simply cannot replicate. Visitors will be able to learn first-hand how the Shuttles were maintained and launched on site. KSC-VC has the ability to guarantee a world-class, permanent home for an Orbiter.

The Kennedy Space Center (KSC) in cooperation with the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex responded to NASA's Request for Information (RFI), issued in December 2008, which sought parties interested in housing an Orbiter and related equipment. It is our understanding that NASA has not taken any action since the receipt of the RFI responses in mid-March.

We urge NASA to expeditiously develop and implement a carefully crafted plan for the disposition of the Shuttle Orbiters and related equipment, regardless of the timing of the decision on the ultimate retirement date of the Shuttle fleet. We strongly support KSC-VC's bid for an Orbiter and, in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations, urge your careful consideration of their request.

We thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We look forward to any comments you may have.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Kosmas (D-FL-24)

Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL)

Senator George LeMieux (R-FL)

Jeff Miller (R-FL-1)

Allen Boyd (D-FL-2)

Corrine Brown (D-FL-3)

Ander Crenshaw (R-FL-4)

G. Brown-Waite (R-FL-5)

Cliff Stearns (R-FL-6)

John Mica (R-FL-7)

Alan Grayson (D-FL-8)

Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-9)

C.W. Bill Young (R-FL-10)

Kathy Castor (D-FL-11)

Adam Putnam (R-FL-12)

Vern Buchanan (R-FL-13)

Connie Mack (R-FL-14)

Bill Posey (R-FL-15)

Tom Rooney (R- FL- 16)

Kendrick Meek (D-FL-17)

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL-18)

Robert Wexler (D-FL-19)

Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL-20)

Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL-21)

Ron Klein (D-FL-22)

Alcee Hastings (D-FL-23)

Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL-25)

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